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Leading the global push

Michael P. Murphy '87 heads one firm's ambitious expansion plan

One of the nation's largest firms is dramatically expanding its international presence, and UB Law graduate Michael P. Murphy '87 is at the helm.

Murphy, a Nixon Peabody senior partner and Reinsurance Group Chair, co-heads its Global Strategies and International Practice. He's leading a robust plan to transform Nixon Peabody — a Global 100 firm with Rochester roots — into a Global 50 firm, with over 1,500 lawyers.

That means building upon recent moves into London, Shanghai and Paris, and establishing offices in Europe, Asia and South America. Murphy lives in the Buffalo suburb of Clarence but works out of Nixon's New York City and London offices.

"The business segments fueling our fire now are the firms and teams we've added to our portfolio in the past six years," says Murphy. "It's a bold and aggressive strategy. We're building a global business that allows Nixon Peabody to thrive even in a downturn in any one market. We're creating a solid platform to serve our clients globally and to ensure that the firm is strong for our employees." The diversification strategy is also aimed at capitalizing on opportunities being created as the global business market grows, he says. Nixon Peabody is building on its strengths in reinsurance, financial services, IP, private equity and sports.

The opportunities are many. Intellectual Property law is growing rapidly in China. France presents "extraordinary" IP, entertainment and private equity opportunity. Germany, France's largest trading partner, is a natural expansion target as Nixon "connects the dots" in Europe. And London is a hub for Nixon's reinsurance, finance, infrastructure and M&A practices.

Murphy is intensely focused on emerging markets like Brazil, where he spends considerable time representing Brazil's largest reinsurer in a \$600 million litigation involving multiple related international arbitrations. Murphy says, "It's critical to understand a market before spending the firm's capital and resources on opening an office. And handling matters in these markets affords us the opportunity to immerse ourselves on the ground. In the process, we learn the business and legal culture of the market, and see more clearly the opportunities and threats necessary to

make informed business decisions about where to place our next bets". India is another market Murphy is focusing on; "it's not an open market, but that's coming, and when it comes we'll be there."

"The foundation for our global strategy is our high-performance, high-commitment culture," says Murphy. "Successful firms have engaged leaders who are passionate about the business and its people, who produce and produce results, and who lead by example and not by rhetoric."

Another Nixon strategy is to be "the best firm to work with and for" and, Murphy says, "we implement that strategy every day." *Fortune* has named Nixon among the "100 Best Companies to Work For." Nixon is also acclaimed for its commitment to diversity and openness to gay and lesbian employees. It's a philosophy that represents, Murphy says, "a profound respect for people and for the Nixon Peabody family."

Bringing global partners on board a U.S.-style, high-performance culture is challenging. "We're guided by an unwavering commitment to alignment — our strategy, culture, compensation and platform is aligned. We're a one-firm firm which looks for global partners whose vision, values, aspirations and commitment line up with ours."

The globalization project comes in addition to Murphy's membership on Nixon's compensation committee and his substantial reinsurance practice. He represents reinsurers and retrocessionaires, including Swiss Re, in international disputes and transactions. He's recognized as one of the world's leading reinsurance lawyers, and his group — which handles M&A, private equity, finance, regulation, IP and international disputes — is ranked among the top global reinsurance industry teams. "It's a great space to play in," he says. "The barriers to entry are high, the competition is low, the deals and disputes are enormous, and the quality of the lawyering and the level of engagement is off the charts."

